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HEROES FOR HOPE™

STARRING THE

X-MEN™

ALL PROCEEDS FROM
THIS COMIC BOOK ARE
BEING DONATED TO
FAMINE RELIEF AND
RECOVERY IN AFRICA.



ADAM
KOPPEL
5-85

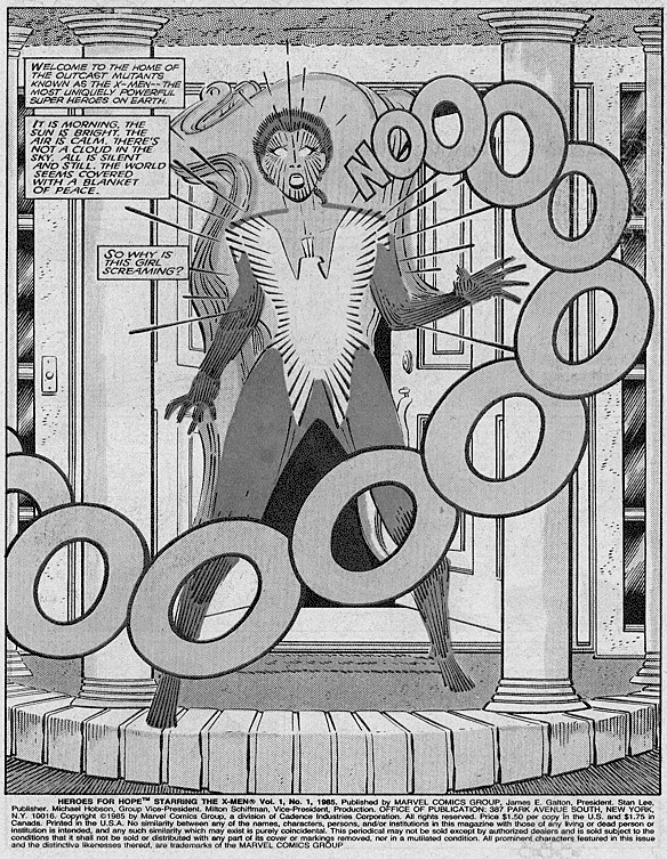


HEROES FOR HOPE

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WELCOME TO THE HOME OF
THE OUTCAST MUTANTS
KNOWN AS THE X-MEN:
THE MOST UNIQUELY POWERFUL
SUPER HEROES ON EARTH.

IT IS MORNING. THE
SUN IS BRIGHT. THE
AIR IS CALM. THERE'S
NOT A CLOUD IN THE
SKY. ALL IS SILENT
AND STILL. THE WORLD
SEEMS COVERED
WITH A BLANKET
OF PEACE.

SO WHY IS
THIS GIRL
SCREAMING?



ROGUE!
STORM! TAKE
CARE! WE MAY
BE UNDER
ATTACK!

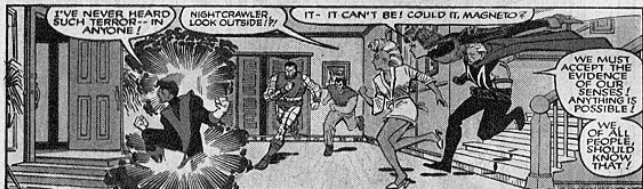
A SCREAM
LIKE THAT CAN
MEAN NOTHING
ELSE!

IT SOUNDS
LIKE-- RACHEL--!

LUCKY THE
GYM ISN'T
SOUND-
PROOF, OR
WE WOULDN'T
HAVE HEARD
HER!

I'LL TELE-
PORT AHEAD--!

THAT IS
RACHEL'S
VOICE--
WHAT
COULD
HAVE
HAPPENED?!



I'VE NEVER HEARD
SUCH TERROR-- IN
ANYONE!

NIGHTCRAWLER,
LOOK OUTSIDE!/?

IT-- IT CAN'T BE! COULD IT, MAGNETO?

WE MUST
ACCEPT THE
EVIDENCE
OF OUR
SENSES!
ANYTHING IS
POSSIBLE!

WE
OF ALL
PEOPLE
SHOULD
KNOW
THAT!



THE --
YARD?!!

WHAT YARD,
ELF-- IT'S NOTHIN'
BUT A DESERT
THAT SUN'S LIKE
A FURNACE.

KITTY'S OUT
THERE! WHAT
IS SHE DOING?
WHO IS THAT
WITH HER,
RACHEL?

THE POSTMAN!
SHE WALKED
OUT TO GET THE
MAIL -- THEN, THE
WORLD WENT
MAD!

THE LANDSCAPE
CHANGED, LIKE
A GIANT HAND
HAD ERASED IT!
THE POSTMAN
WAS TERRIFIED!
HE COLLAPSED!

THEN THAT IS
WHY YOU
SCREAMED!

WHAT DO
WE DO?
HOW DO
YOU
FIGHT A
CHANGE OF
SCENERY?

PATIENCE,
ROGUE. THIS
IS NO CAPRI-
CIOUS WHIM
OF NATURE.

WHATEVER
THE ANSWER,
THERE'S
INTELLIGENCE
BEHIND IT.



HE'S STILL BREATHING! HAVE TO GET
HIM OUT OF THE HOT SUN!

GOTTA TRY
NOT TO THINK
ABOUT WHAT'S
GOING ON-- IF
I WANT TO
KEEP MY
SANITY.

IT'S ALL TOO
CRAZY!
THINGS LIKE
THIS CAN'T
HAPPEN!

THE GROUNDS OF
OUR MANSION
CAN'T SUDDENLY
TURN INTO A
DESERT IN THE
WINK OF AN EYE!

HEY, X-MEN!
HOW ABOUT
LENDING A
HAND?

I'D HAVE BEEN HERE SOONER, KATZCHEN, BUT IT TOOK A MINUTE TO REALIZE WE WEREN'T HALLUCINATING!

YOU CAN LEAVE HIM TO ME NOW, KITTY.

BE CAREFUL, NIGHTCRAWLER HE'S IN A BAD WAY.

WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

BUT AS SUDDENLY AS HE APPEARED BY KITTY'S SIDE, KURT WAGNER TELEPORTS AWAY-- WITH A CRY OF TERROR THAT MATCHES RACHEL'S...

KURT!

THE HORROR-- COULDN'T HELP MYSELF-- LOOKED THROUGH... GATES OF HADES-- AND INTO...

I SHALL GO!
NO, COLOSSUS-- LET WOLVERINE!

ON MY WAY, BOSS.

HIS MUTANT HEALING FACTOR AND SURVIVAL SKILLS MAKE HIM THE BEST CHOICE.

THIS HEAT IS SOMETHIN' ELSE. IN HUMAN OR ARMORED FORM, COLOSSUS WOULDN'T HAVE LASTED A DOZEN STEPS. WONDER WHAT'S KEEPIN' KITTY ALIVE?!

HEY-- WHAT GIVES?!

ALL OF A SUDDEN I FEEL LIKE I AIN'T EATEN IN WEEKS.

MY FLESH-- PULLIN' TIGHT OVER MY BONES! THIS IS CRAZY! IT'S LIKE I'M IN THE EARLY STAGES OF STARVATION!

THIS IS WHY IT HADDA BE ME OUT HERE WITHOUT MY HEALING POWER, THE OTHERS WOULD BE IN BIG TROUBLE.

KITTY, LEGGO-- I'LL TAKE OVER NOW.

SHADOWCAT-- LISTEN UP, GIRL-- IT'S WOLVERINE!





SEVERAL HOURS LATER...
TIRED AND FRUSTRATED, COLOSSUS
REVERTS FROM ARMORED TO
HUMAN FORM AND...



NO SIGN OF
AN INTRUDER,
PETER!

I FOUND NO
ONE EITHER TOVARISH!
SO I HAVE OPTED FOR
A TASK OVER WHICH I
HAVE SOME
CONTROL!

I SHALL
EXCEED YESTER-
DAY'S LAPS BY
FIVE...OR DIE
IN THE
ATTEMPT!

SOUNDS MORE
LIKE PUNISHMENT
THAN EXERCISE, MY
FRIEND.

PERHAPS, KURT...
BUT ON MY FAMILY'S
COLLECTIVE WHEAT
FARM IN RUSSIA,
"EXERCISE" WAS A
LUXURY FOR THE
DECADENT.

WORK--
THAT WAS
THE MEASURE
OF A MAN!

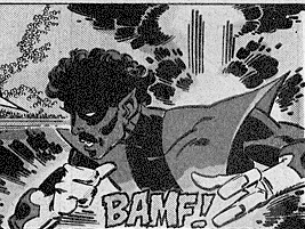
YET, HERE YOU
ARE-- A TIN-MAN
TRAPPED IN THIS
DECADENT QZ! BUT
YOU WILL BE A
'MAN' IF IT
KILLS YOU!

VERY WELL,
MY FRIEND! COME
OUT BEFORE YOU
RUST!

THE "WIZARD
OF OZ" TAPE HAS
GOT TO GO! TIN-
MAN INDEED!

I ONLY WISH LIKE
HIM I HAD NO HEART
TO BREAK!

WHEN KITTY WAS ATTACKED, I WAS
GLAD THAT WOLVERINE WAS CHOSEN TO
GO FOR HER! I WAS... AFRAID!



BAMF!



MY
TOWEL!
KURT, HOW
WILL I
DRY OFF
NOW?

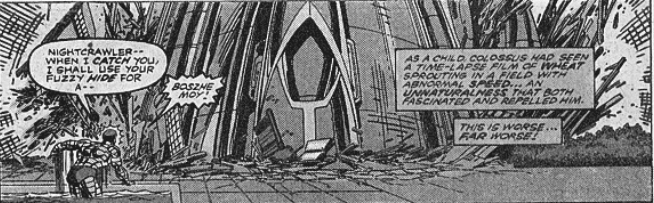
BY THE
WHITE WOLF--
IT'S DRAGGING
ME UNDER!
STRANGLING
ME!

LUCKILY I
DON'T HAVE TO
DROWN! WHERE
HUMAN FLESH
FAILS...

"MY
'TIN-MAN'S"
STRENGTH
SHALL END
THIS
APPALLING
JOKE!



RIPPP

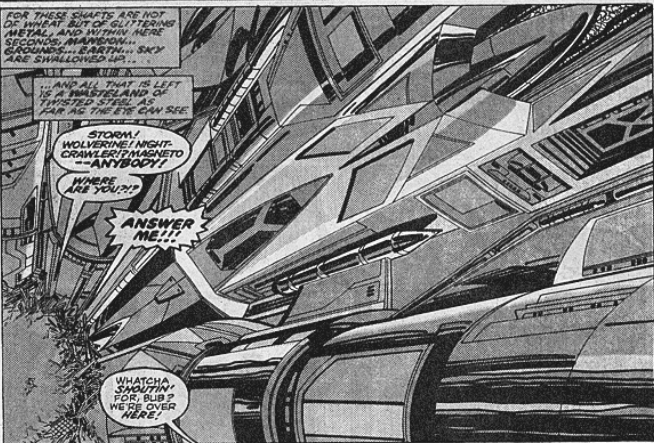
A black and white comic panel showing Nightcrawler in a dark, industrial setting with twisted metal and debris. He is looking towards the right.

NIGHTCRAWLER--
WHEN I CATCH YOU,
I SHALL USE YOUR
FUZZY HIDE FOR
A--

BOSZNE
MOY

AS A CHILD COLOSSUS HAD SEEN
A TIME-LAPSE FILM OF WHEAT
SPOUTING IN A FIELD WITH
ABNORMAL SPEED... AN
UNNATURALNESS THAT BOTH
FASCINATED AND REPELLED HIM.

THIS IS WORSE...
FAR WORSE!

A large, detailed illustration of a massive, twisted metal structure, possibly a giant's foot or a piece of machinery, dominating the middle panel.

FOR THESE SHAFTS ARE NOT
OF WHEAT BUT OF GLITTERING
METAL, AND WITHIN HERE
SECONDS, MANDRIN...
GROUNDS... EARTH... SKY
ARE SWALLOWED UP...

...AND ALL THAT IS LEFT
IS A WASTELAND OF
TWISTED STEEL AS
FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE.

STORM!
WOLVERINE! NIGHT-
CRAWLER! MAGNETO
--ANYBODY!

WHERE
ARE YOU?!

ANSWER
ME!!!

WHATCHA
SHOUTIN'
FOR, BUB?
WE'RE OVER
HERE!

A black and white comic panel showing four mutants: a woman with flame hair, Wolverine, a man with a star on his forehead, and a man in a cape. They are all looking towards the left.

NO! Y-YOUR SKIN!
IT'S--

VERY SLEEK
AND HIGH-TECH,
IS IT NOT? AND
HARD! SO
HARD...

THE WORLD'S
BECOME A HARD
PLACE, BUB...WE
GOTTA BE HARD
TOO...

...OR WE
DIE--!

HARD!
COLD!
IN CONTROL!
LIKE
YOU!





PETER GOBBING LIKE A BABY -- BUT NIGHT-CRAWLER IS CARING FOR HIM.

I BELIEVE MAGNETO, OUR Foe, MAY HAVE JUST CLAIMED HIS SECOND VICTIM.



COLOSSUS SEEMS UNHURT ...

... AT LEAST, PHYSICALLY.



I FEEL SO HELPLESS, STORM!

PERHAPS THAT IS THE IDEA.



IN THE OLD DAYS, I WOULD SIMPLY HAVE GONE OUT AND ATTACKED.

NO THOUGHT OF CONSEQUENCES OR COST -- ACTION BEGETS REACTION!

THAT MUST HAVE MADE LIFE MUCH SIMPLER...



IF ANYONE'S INTERESTED IN LUNCH -- I'M STARVED!

AH, THE RESILIENCE OF YOUTH --



--KITTY ACTS AS IF NOTHING UNTOWARD HAS HAPPENED.

WHERE IS COLOSSUS?

SAYS HE LOST HIS APPETITE. HE WENT OFF TO LIE DOWN.

IF HE ISN'T FEELING WELL, I BET A BOWL OF MY MOM'S CHICKEN SOUP'LL PUT HIM RIGHT! I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT!

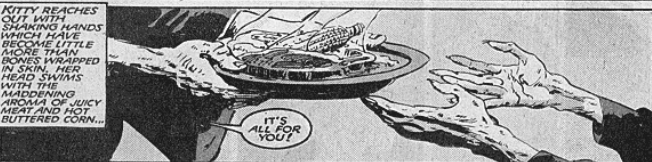
A LIKELY STORY, MISS PRYDE! YOU ASK ME, THAT GROWING GIRL'S OFF TO GRAB HERSELF SOME MUNCHIES!

FUZZY-ELF--GIMME A BREAK/I CAN EAT IF I WANT.



THE TENDONS IN THE THIN HANDS FEEL AS POWERFUL AS STEEL CABLES.







OK, BUT MY DEAR! DON'T YOU KNOW?

I AM MISERY'S MAITRE D', THE CHEF OF STARVATION, WAITER TO THE WAIFS OF THE WORLD, HASH-SLINGER TO THE HOMELESS!

I AM, MY DEAR, EVERY HUNGRY BLOATED BELLY, EVERY DYING EYE, EVERY PICKED BONE DRYING IN THE DESERT.

I'M PESTILANCE AND DESOLATION, KITTY...

... BUT MY FRIENDS JUST CALL ME HUNGRY!

NOW STARVE...

STARVE...

STARVE...

MY BODY WASTING AWAY... I CAN FEEL IT GOING!

A CURIOUS NIGHTCRAWLER, SURE THAT KITTY MUST BE CLEANING THE REFRIGERATOR FROM ONE WALL TO THE OTHER, POKES INTO THE KITCHEN...

KITTY!

HIS FRIENDS JUST CALL HIM... CALL HIM... HUNGRY...

CALL WHO 'HUNGRY'--

--LIEBER GOT--
WHAT IS THIS
THING?

WHATEVER IT IS, IT CARESSES THE HIDDEN
CORNERS OF NIGHTCRAWLER'S MIND...

... AND OPENS
THE FLOODGATES
OF MEMORY!

WHAT LASHES NURT WAGNER
THEN IS A VISION OF HIS PAST
FILTERED THROUGH HIS OWN
SELF-LOATHING, HIS OWN LONG-
SUPPRESSED GUILT AND DESPAIR.

HOW ELSE
COULD HE FEEL,
BORN A MONSTER,
ABANDONED BY
HIS PARENTS...

... A FREAK WHO,
HOWEVER JUSTIFIED
IN SLAYING HIS EVIL
FOSTER BROTHER,
ALWAYS FELT HIMSELF
MORE DESERVING OF
DEATH?

I-I SOUGHT SELF-ESTEEM IN THE
X-MEN, ONLY TO FAIL THEM WHEN
THEY LOOKED TO ME FOR
LEADERSHIP!

ONLY MY FAITH
SUSTAINED ME...

... AND
THAT
IS NO
MORE.

I AM LOST.

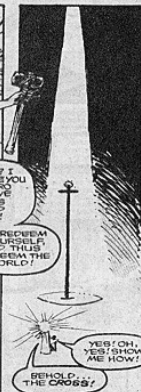


I CAN DISPEL
NIGHT-
CRAWLER--
AND SHOW
YOU THE
WAY!

ARE YOU
THE ENEMY?

ENEMY? I
CAN MAKE YOU
THE HERO
YOU HAVE
ALWAYS
WISHED
TO BE!

TO REDEEM
YOURSELF
AND THUS
REDEEM THE
WORLD!



BEHOLD...
THE CROSS!

YES! OH,
YES! SHOW
ME HOW!



no.



ONE MAN COULD--
AND DID--
SACRIFICE HIMSELF
TO SAVE THE
WORLD!



BUT I AM
NOT HE!



VIEWED ONE WAY YOUR
DEMISE WOULD ALLOW
ANOTHER OCCUPYING YOUR
PLANET TO LIVE...TO EAT!



VIEWED ANOTHER,
WHAT MATTERS
THE DEATH...OF
A DEMON?

"BUT YOU'VE MADE
YOUR CHOICE."

"NOW LIVE
WITH IT!"



WHAT THE
FLAMIN'--?

OUR "VISITOR" HAS STRUCK AGAIN!

KITTY'S DOWN--
AND NIGHTCRAWLER'S
COLLAPSING!

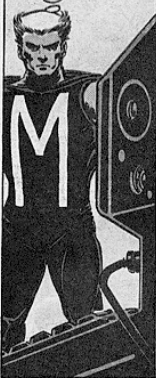


I-I'VE
GOT
HIM--

--WHAT'S LEFT
OF HIM?

LATER ... I CAN'T LET THAT THING CLAIM ANOTHER X-MAN. WHILE THEY SEARCH FOR OUR Foe WITH THEIR NATURAL TALENTS, I SHALL TRY MY HAND WITH CERE BRO.

MY ATTEMPT AT SCANNING EARLIER TODAY WAS FRUITLESS -- BUT, WHO KNOWS, I MIGHT GET LUCKY.



JUST LIKE LAST TIME.

THREE SQUARE MILES OF ZILCH!



HOPE WOLVIE DOES BETTER...

NO SCENT.

NO TRAIL.

BUT HE'S HERE--I HOPE ROGUE SEES SOMETHING FROM THE AIR...



AND IN RACHEL'S ROOM ...

IT HURT MY FRIENDS--

--IT'LL KEEP HURTING, IF IT ISN'T STOPPED.



I TOLD MYSELF I'M BIG ENOUGH, GROWN UP ENOUGH, TO CLAIM MY MOTHER'S MANTLE AS 'WOLVIE', AND IN THE PROCESS MAKE UP FOR THE HARM SHE DID--THIS MAY BE A CHANCE TO PROVE IT!

AND WHILE THE SEARCH BEGINS, STORM TENDS THE THREE CASUALTIES IN THE INFIRMARY...

THEY HAVE GIVEN UP ALL HOPE-- ALL THEIR WILL TO LIVE--HAS BEEN STRIPPED FROM THEM.

PHYSICALLY, THEY ARE IN PERFECT HEALTH, YET THEIR SURVIVAL HANGS BY THE SLENDEREST OF THREADS.

IN MY AFRICAN HOMELAND, I WAS ACCLAIMED A GODDESS-- WHY CAN I NOT HELP THOSE I LOVE NOW?!



I WAS SO AFRAID.

I STILL AM.

ALL MY COURAGE --IT WAS MERELY BRAVADO. AND MY HUMANITY... AN ACT. A LIE.



AT LAST, I FACE THE TRUTH-- THAT I AM A COWARD --FAR, FAR LESS THAN A MAN!



"CEREBRO."

"THE HEADPIECE IS A GIANT'S SKULL. OLD DREAMS AND HOLLOW MEMORIES STILL WHISPERS INSIDE. IF I READ ITS BUMPS CORRECTLY, THE NATURE OF OUR ENEMY WILL BE REVEALED."



"I PUT IT ON."



"SILENCE."

"PERHAPS THE BEAST HAS SNIFFED AT US AND PASSED BY, MOVING OUT OF RANGE. I MUST SEEK FURTHER."

"NO MATTER. THAT IS THE WAY IN WHICH WE WOULD ALL PREFER TO VIEW SUCH HORRORS..."



"...FROM A DISTANCE."



"IT IS UPON ME. IT IS REAL. THERE IS NO AVOIDING IT. RIPPING THROUGH MY MIND, TEARING ALL MY REASONS AND EXCUSES ASIDE LIKE PAPER..."

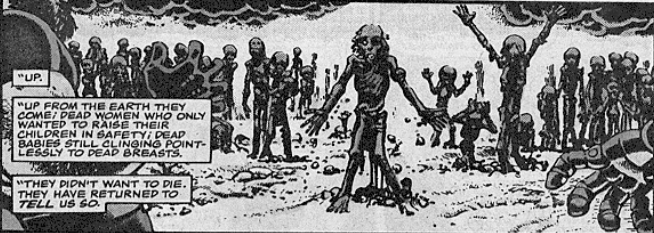
"I HAVE MET THE ENEMY, AND THE ENEMY IS..."



"...DEFEATED! EVERY LAST MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD, TRAMPLED BENEATH THE HEELS AND PAWS AND FLIPPERS OF YOUR DEVOTED SERVANTS!"

"ALL GLORY TO MAGNETO!"

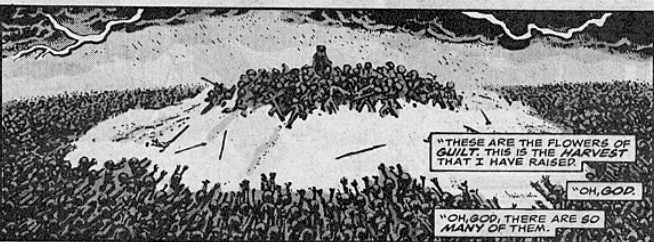




"UP.

"UP FROM THE EARTH THEY
CAME; DEAD WOMEN WHO ONLY
WANTED TO RAISE THEIR
CHILDREN IN SAFETY; DEAD
BABIES STILL CLINGING POINT-
LESSLY TO DEAD BREASTS.

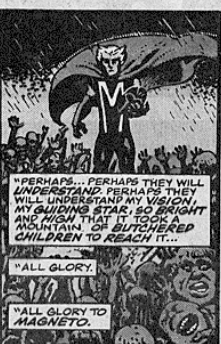
"THEY DIDN'T WANT TO DIE.
THEY HAVE RETURNED TO
TELL US SO.



"THESE ARE THE FLOWERS OF
GUILT. THIS IS THE HARVEST
THAT I HAVE RAISED.

"OH, GOD.

"OH, GOD, THERE ARE SO
MANY OF THEM.



"PERHAPS... PERHAPS THEY WILL
UNDERSTAND. PERHAPS THEY
WILL UNDERSTAND MY VISION,
MY GUIDING STAR, SO BRIGHT
AND HIGH THAT IT TOOK A
MOUNTAIN OF BUTCHERED
CHILDREN TO REACH IT..."

"ALL GLORY.

"ALL GLORY TO
MAGNETO.



"MY SOLDIERS ARE GONE.
I AM ALONE WITH THE
DEAD. THEY TOUCH ME,
AND I KNOW WHAT I AM.
I KNOW WHAT I HAVE
TAKEN FROM THEM.

"THE HANDS OF THE DEAD
ARE UPON ME..."



"... AND I DO NOT EVEN
HAVE THE RIGHT TO
SCREAM."

ALONE IN HER ROOM, RACHEL IS DEEP IN TELEPATHIC PURSUIT-- WHEN SOMETHING SNEAKS UP AND TAPS ON HER MIND...

MY PSYCHIC SCREENS-- THEY'VE BEEN BLOWN OPEN!
I CAN'T HOLD OUT ANY THOUGHTS!

EVERYONE-- THE WHOLE WORLD-- IS IN MY MIND!

ALL THE MERCY-- EVERYONE'S PAIN-- THE GUILT... I FEEL SO GUILTY!!... ALL THE SUFFERING IN THE WORLD IS MINE!

I CAN'T HANDLE THIS-- I GO INSANE!

PHOENIX! SHE COULD HANDLE THIS!

MUST TAKE ON THE FREEDOM AND POWER OF MY MOM-- OF PHOENIX-- AND AVENGE THE WORLD!

I'LL FREE THEM FROM THEIR PAIN!

I'LL RISE AGAIN, AS--NOT I'M FALLING!

THE 'FUTURE WORLD' FROM WHICH I CAME--

--THE ALTERNATE TIMELINE WHERE MUTANTS WERE CRIMINALS, TO BE SLAIN ON SIGHT!

I'M NOT A PHOENIX-- I'M A HOUND AGAIN!

MY JOB WAS TO LEAD THE HUMANS TO THEIR PREY--

--MY OWN KIND... MURDERED BECAUSE OF ME!

DOWN WITH MY BELLY IN THE DIRT AGAIN-- LIKE A DOG!

I CAN'T FACE THIS!

MUST RUN AND HIDE BEFORE I'M--

--CAUGHT!

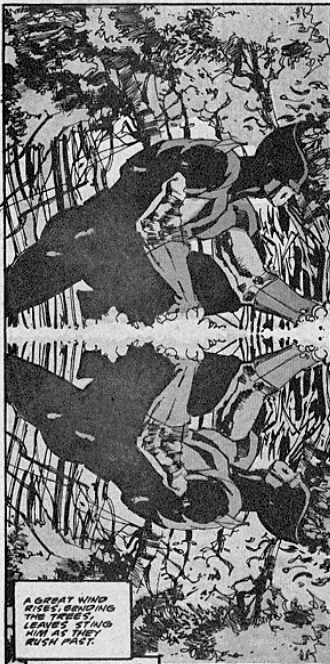




THE ENTITY IS HERE. TINY HAIRS STIR AT THE BASE OF HIS SKULL: THE ENEMY PRESENCE IS HERE.

IN HIGH, LATE-AFTERNOON SUNLIGHT, HE STEPS INTO A CLEARING.

THEN, IN A MOMENT, THE LIGHT DIMS; THE SUN PASSES BEHIND OMINOUS CLOUDS; DARKNESS FALLS!



A GREAT WIND RISES, BENDING THE TREES, LEAVES STING HIM AS THEY RUSH PAST.

THEN COLD...TERRIFYING COLD...CHILLING HIM TO THE CORE!

THE TREES CLOSE OVER A CANOPY BLOTTING OUT THE SKY.

TOTAL DARKNESS...AND THE Scent OF HIS OWN UNNATURAL FEAR. HE SINKS TO HIS KNEES... WOLVERINE.



HE RISES...A NAKED LOGAN, NO LONGER THE HALF-BEAST-THING.



HAIR NORMAL; NO CLAWS; NO UNIFORM; A NORMAL MAN.



NAKED AND VULNERABLE...SEWILDERED. HE LOOKS AROUND...



...FASCINATED BY HIS OWN BODY; HUMAN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS MEMORY.



THEN HE SENSES THE SHADE IN THE SHADOWS, WATCHING.



WATCHING.

AND LOGAN THE MAN FACES WOLVERINE. "THIS IS NOW IT WAS FOR YOU, LONG BEFORE HUDSON FOUND YOU IN THE FOREST OF THE...

"...CANADIAN ROCKIES, LOGAN." THE VOICE IS SOFT, FERAL, MENACING.

"BEFORE YOUR SKELETON WAS LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM. THIS IS WHAT YOU WERE WHEN YOU COULDN'T HEAL YOURSELF...

"...WHEN YOU WERE MERELY HUMAN.

"I CAN EASE YOUR PAIN, LOGAN. I CAN TELL YOU THE SECRET. I CAN FILL IN ALL THE EMPTY MEMORIES.

"...I'S BEAT ME, KIDDO!"

"NOT EVEN TO LEARN WHO I WAS OR HOW I CAME TO THIS. NOBODY BEATS THOSE ODDS." CHAGRINously, WOLVERINE SAYS, "OH, GIVE IT A SHOT."

LOGAN'S VOICE TREMBLES: NOBODY CAN BEAT WOLVERINE. NOBODY BEATS THE BEST.

...AS HE LAUNCHES HIMSELF AT LOGAN.

FRAIL HUMAN FLESH...

...HASN'T GOT THE CHANCE OF A SNAIL IN A BUCKET OF SALT.

LOGAN SCRABBLES THROUGH UNDERBRUSH, DUCKING, PLODDING. "DONE PLAYING WITH YOU, KIDDO!" HE COMES FOR...

...HIS PREY. BUT LOGAN, DESPERATE, USES THE "WHICHIN TRAP" WOLVERINE CLAWS DEEP...

...IN THE TREE, YANKS AND STRUGGLES...

LOGAN TURNS THE BEAST THINGS POISED AT WOLVERINE'S CLAWS, THROAT...
"ONE HEART BEAT AWAY..."

...FROM DRIVING ADAMANTEUM...

...WITH CERTAIN FATAL PRECISION, THROUGH...
...THE X-MAN'S NECK.

"NO, NOT THIS TIME! I'M NOT AN ANIMAL, I'M A MAN! I'M NOT LOSING THAT!"

"NO!"

WOLVERINE--
THE ENTITY--
SCINTILLATES
LIKE A ROMAN
CANDLE...

...THE CHILL WIND
RISES, THE SHADOW
THING DISSOLVES INTO
A MOTE-FILLED PILLAR
OF LIGHT RUSHING UP
IN A SHOWER...

...AND IS GONE...LOGAN STANDS,
NAKED AND BLOODY. DARK-
NESS SWALLOWS HIM AGAIN,
WITH LIGHT...

...WOLVERINE IS
HIMSELF ONCE
MORE, BEWILDERED.

*WE DON'T
HAVE TO BUY
INTO THAT
ORIGINAL SIN
GARBAGE.

SPENT,
BUT A
LITTLE
MORE
HUMAN.

"THERE'S BETTER STUFF IN US,
WE'RE THE ONES WHO WALK ON THE
MOON; THE ONES WHO PAINTED THE
SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING..."

"...THE ONES WHO INVENTED THE GOLDEN
RULE! WE'RE NOT BEASTS! YOU DON'T TURN
ME INTO WHAT YOU ARE!"

"I'M
HUMAN,
HUMAN!"

AND IT MOVES
ON... TO STORM!

SO...MY
TURN HAS
COME!

IS
THIS
OUR
FOE?
O
O

WHO ARE
YOU? WHY
ARE YOU
ATTACKING
US??

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT??

YOWZA!
YOWZA!
YOWZA!!!

FOLLOW
ME DOWN MY
HALL OF
MIRRORS--

--IF YOU
DARE!

FIND SOME
ANSWERS, LEARN
LOTS OF LOVELY
LITTLE
SECRETS...

I AM
IN NO MOOD
FOR GAMES,
CREATURE!

I AM.

NO OFFENSE, NO HARM
DONE! ALL IN FUN, YOU'RE
A GOOD SPORT, HEY??

YOU'RE THE STRONG ONE,
THE MATURE ONE, THE ADULT--
YOU'LL PUT UP WITH ANYTHING!

SO COME ONE,
COME ALL--SEE
EVERY ORGO THAT'S
EVER BEEN AND
THE STORMS STILL
YET TO BE!

THE WHAT-IF'S,
DREAMS AND
NIGHTMARES--
THE LONG-
SUGHT,
NEVER-
FOUND...

...HEARTS
DESIRE!

DON'T BE
SCARED, DON'T
BE SHY!

LIFE IS LIKE
ART--IT'S ALL
DONE WITH
MIRRORS--

--WHAT YOU
SEE IS WHAT
YOU ARE!

SO TELL US,
WIND-RIDER,
WHICH THEN
IS THE
REAL YOU!

...EARTH
MOTHER?

THE ALL-
AMERICAN
GIRL??

C'MON, YOU
LOST YOUR POWERS,
YOU'RE NOT A MUTANT
ANYMORE, YOU'VE
NO REAL RIGHT TO
LEAD THE X-MEN!

...SWEETHEART,
YOU GOTTA BE
SOMETHING!



COME BACK,
YOU...

SHINING

...THESE
...SHOES...

AN...
ARENA OF
SOME SORT...

AND THOSE
LOOK LIKE...
STACKS AND
STACKS OF--!

?!?!?

OH THEY
ARE, DEARIE.
THEY ARE!

WASN'T THAT
DELICIOUS?

HERE...
HAVE
ANOTHER.

HAVE A
LOT!





IT IS OVER!

GODDESS...

...THE THING
...KNEW ME--
MY DREAMS, MY
WEAKNESSES...

NO WONDER
THE OTHERS ARE
SO SHAKEN--

--THIS ENTITY
STRIKES TO THE
VERY CORE OF
OUR BEINGS.

BUT WE MUST
FIGHT--RESIST--!

UP, X-MEN!

ON YOUR FEET,
MY FRIENDS, WE
ARE NOT DONE
YET! THIS BATTLE
IS FAR FROM
OVER!

WHY BOTHER, ORORO? WE
ARE ALL BUT DUST ANYWAY.

IS THAT A REASON TO
GIVE UP, LITTLE BROTHER?



LISTEN TO ME--THIS
THING, THIS...ENTITY,
SEIZES ON OUR INNER-
MOST SELVES.

IT PLAYS GOOD AGAINST BAD, LIGHT AGAINST
DARK, HOPE AGAINST FEAR--IT TWISTS BOTH
TRUTH AND LIE, SAYS AND DOES *ANYTHING*...

BUT WHY, ORORO?
FOR WHAT REASON??

TO
HURT
US.

SUCKER
DOES A
FLAMING
GOOD JOB,
TOO.

I MAY
NEVER
FEEL
WELL-FED
AGAIN...

...YET
THE VERY
THOUGHT OF
FOOD MAKES
ME SICK.

THEY ALL
LOOK
AWFUL!





WHY HAVEN'T *AN* BEEN HIT? WHAT'S THIS ENTITY GOT IN STORE FOR ME?!!

WE ARE UNDER ATTACK--AND, AS ALWAYS, WE FACE A CHOICE, WHETHER OR NOT TO FIGHT. WE HAVE NEVER BEFORE FAILED OUR CHARGE--

--ARE WE NOW TO BEGIN?!

X-MEN--LOOK AT YOURSELVES. THINK OF WHAT WE HAVE FACED AND ENDURED IN OUR LIVES!

IS THIS SO MUCH WORSE?!



JA, ORORO--IT IS.

MOST OF OUR POWERS ARE PHYSICAL--OF NO USE AGAINST A PSYCHIC FOE.

EVEN RACHEL--OUR NEW PHOENIX--COULD NOT WITHSTAND ITS ONSLAUGHT.

YOU SAY RESIST--
I ASK HOW?!



I DO NOT KNOW, YET. WE COULD ALWAYS...

...TRY TELLING JOKES.

PBRRRAPS, ROGUE. IF EVEN ONE OF US CAN STILL *SMILE*, NIGHTCRAWLER...

I'M DONE WITH TALKIN'!



THIS CRITTER TEARS OUT YOUR HEART...

...BUT LEAVES YOU ALIVE.

THAT'S HIS MISTAKE.

I'M ITCHIN' TO PAY THE FAVOR BACK.

IN THAT CASE, *MEIN FREUND*, IF YOU'RE BOUND AND DETERMINED...



...I'D BEST COME ALONG TO KEEP YOU OUT OF TROUBLE.

WE SHALL ALL GO

BUT WHERE, GUYS?

THE ENTITY AND I WERE IN--
RAPPORT,
ORORO.

I THINK I KNOW WHERE TO FIND HIM.

SOON, THE X-MEN ARE ABOARD THE BLACKBIRD STREAKING EASTWARD, SKIMMING THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE -- A TINY GROUP OF MUTATED HUMANS ON THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE EARTH'S VAUGHNITY AND BEAUTY AND THE HARSH, ETERNAL COLD OF SPACE...

INSIDE THE CASIN, THERE IS SILENCE EXCEPT FOR THE MUTED MURMUR OF THE ENGINES. NO ONE SMILES, NOR DOES ANYONE LOOK INTO A COMPANION'S EYES.

TENSION HANGS ALMOST IMPAIRABLY IN THE AIR.

FINALLY, SOMEONE MUTTERS...

IT WON'T BE EASY... FACING THAT THING AGAIN--

807

BUT WE WILL FACE IT, BECAUSE WE MUST.

AH, HE'S NEVER EVEN FACED IT, GACE... NOT YET.

AH, I'M AFRAID IT CAN.

AH, WONDER WHAT IT HAS IN STORE FOR ME!

CAN IT BE WORSE IN WHAT IT DID TO THE OTHERS?

AH, THAT SCARES ME HALF TO DEATH!

THEN, NIGHTCRAWLER
EASES THE AIRCRAFT TO
A LANDING AND--

THIS IS
AFRICA?

I'VE NEVER SEEN
ANYTHING SO
BARREN--

BUT BEAUTIFUL--
IT'S BEAUTIFUL,
TOO.

LOOK--DOWN
THERE!

HEAT, SUDDEN,
STIRLING, OVER
WHELMING HEAT.

A PORTRAIT
OF HUMANITY...

...IN A
WORLD OVER-
FLOWING WITH
FOOD AND
WEALTH.

MY
LORD!

SUCH
MISERY!
THEY'RE SO
WEAK... SO
HELPLESS--

THEY'RE SO
SAD...

THIS IS
TERRIBLE!

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
A PICNIC?

IS THIS THE ENTIRETY'S
FAULT, WOLVERINE?
DID HE CAUSE
THIS?

WE'VE GOT
TO STOP HIM,
X-MEN-- BEFORE
IT'S TOO
LATE!

WHICH IS THE GREATER
NEED, ROSUE-- BAT-
TLING A VILLAIN--
OR...?

BUT WHAT CAN
WE DO? WE ARE
SO FEW--

--AND
THEY ARE
SO MANY!

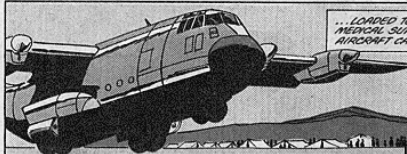
WOLVERINE HEARS THEM FIRST--

"HERKY-BIRDS," LOCKHEED
HERCULES TRANSPORTS ...



... LOADED TO CAPACITY WITH FOOD, CLOTHING,
MEDICAL SUPPLIES, SHELTER, AS MUCH AS EACH
AIRCRAFT CAN CARRY...

...BUT ONLY A
FRACTION OF WHAT'S
TRULY NEEDED.



EVERYONE KNOWS
THAT THE PLANE
MEANS LIFE--
AND THEY RUN
FORWARD
EAGERLY...



STAY BACK, PLEASE!

LET US
HANDLE IT!

THE SUPPLIES
WILL BE DIS-
TRIBUTED AS
SOON AS THEY'RE
UNLOADED!



THE PLANE'S
TAKING IN TOO
CLOSE!

GUYS, LOOK!
THE ENGINES--
THE PROPELLERS
ARE STILL
SPINNING--

--THOSE
POOR PEOPLE
WILL BE CUT
TO PIECES!!



SHUT 'EM DOWN,
SKIPPER--!!

I CAN'T! THERE'S
NO TIME, THEY'RE
TOO CLOSE--!

THE MASS AND MOMENTUM OF THE CROWD IS FORCING THE FRONT RANKS INTO THE BLADES!

WE CAN'T HIDE BEHIND OUR DISGUISES--

--AND WHO KNOWS, PERHAPS THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF A FANDED, FORK-TAILED DEMON...

...WILL FRIGHTEN THE PEOPLE BACK?!

ZUM TUEFUL-- THIS IS CUTTING THINGS A BIT TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT!

I'LL GRAB THOSE IN THE MOST DANGER--

--MORE THAN I'VE EVER TRIED TELEPORTING AT ONCE...

...BUT I CAN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT NOW--

--LORD OF ALL, PLEASE GIVE ME STRENGTH--

DID IT--

--BUT THERE ARE SO MANY OTHERS...

...WHAT ABOUT THEM?!

CRUOSH THAT THOUGHT, NIGHTCRAWLER.

NOT TO WORRY, THE SITUATION IS WELL IN HAND.

MY TELE-KINETIC SHIELD WILL PROTECT THESE PEOPLE TILL IT'S SAFE. IT'S NO GREAT STRAIN--THEY'RE HARDLY PUTTING ANY PRESSURE ON ME AT ALL, BECAUSE THEY'RE SO WEAK! I CAN FEEL THEM DYING, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!

WITH THE X-MEN'S
HELP, THE FLIGHT
IS QUICKLY
EMPTIED...

...AS IS
THE NEXT...

...AND
THE
NEXT.

...AND
THE
NEXT.

NONE FORGET THE REASON
THEY ARE HERE--THE
DEADLY Foe THEY SEEK--
YET THE TERRIBLE NEED IN
THE CAMP IS SO GREAT,
THESE PEOPLE'S FLIGHT
TOO HEARTRENDING...

THEY CARRY, THEY FEED, THEY
TEND THE SICK, COMFORT
THE DYING, BURY THE DEAD.

AND,
FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN
THEIR LIVES, FIND
THEMSELVES ACCEPTED--
WITHOUT QUESTION OR
HESITATION OR QUALIFICATION.

...IT
CANNOT
BE
DENIED.

YO,
COLOSSUS--
WE REST
WHEN WE'RE
DONE!

AND WHEN,
TOVARISCH,
WILL THAT BE?!

YET, FOR ALL
THEIR EFFORTS,
ALL THE AID--
NOTHING SEEMS
TO CHANGE.

OUR TASK
APPEARS SO...
HOPELESS,
WILDERNE. AND
WHAT OF THE
ENTITY--SHOULD
WE NOT BE
HUNTING HIM?

GLORY CAN WAIT,
BUB--THIS IS
MORE IMPORTANT.

HERE, THERE ARE NO HUMANS, NO MUTANTS--
MERELY THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, THOSE WITH
HOPE AND THOSE FAR BEYOND IT. THE PEOPLE
HAVEN'T THE ENERGY TO WASTE IN FEAR AND
HATRED--THE CHILDREN CAN'T EVEN SMILE AS
KITTY TRIES HER BEST TO CHEER THEM UP...

...THEY'RE TOO BUSY
FIGHTING TO STAY
ALIVE.

EVEN THE PHENOMENAL ENDURANCE OF THE X-MEN IS FINITE. DAYS LATER, EXHAUSTED BY BOTH PHYSICAL STRAIN AND MENTAL DRAIN, THE GROUP STARRING DISCONSOLATELY BY A CRACKLING CAMPFIRE AND APPRAISES THEIR BLEAK EFFORTS...

YOU KNOW, I CAN TAKE THE PAIN OF BATTLE... I CAN EVEN ACCEPT THE HUMILITY OF DEFEAT... IT'S THIS HELPLESSNESS I CAN'T BEAR!

LOOK AT US! WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES! SAVIORS OF THE UNIVERSE-- BIG DEAL!

A LESSON IN HUMILITY, PERHAPS, KITTY... WE ARE NOT, AFTER ALL, GOD, WHATEVER GOD MAY BE.

AND UNLIKE GOD, WE NEED THIS FIRE FOR WARMTH, FOR SUCCOR. YET WHEN WE FELLED THE TREE FOR WOOD WE REMOVED ESSENTIAL GROUND COVER, THAT ALLOWED THE WIND TO SNEAK AWAY THE TOP SOIL, AND THAT LEFT A SANDY, MOISTURELESS SURFACE, TOO POOR IN NUTRIENTS TO GROW CROPS. WE CREATE HAVOC IN THE ACT OF ATTEMPTING TO CONTAIN IT...

I SIGH... I DO NOT KNOW... I AM AS DRAINED OF ANSWERS... AS THIS SOIL IS OF LIFE...

MEANWHILE, ACROSS CAMP, ROGUE CONTINUES HER SEEMINGLY FRUITLESS MINISTRATIONS, MIND AND BODY FLAGGING WITH EXHAUSTION...

... TOO WEAK EVEN TO EAT... HE'S DYING, I CAN FEEL IT...

ABRUPTLY, THE SKELETAL ARMS REACH OUT IN A FEEBLE EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE-- THE FRAIL TOUCH TRIGGERING ROGUE'S POWER, CAUSING HER TO ABSORB THE CHILD'S MEMORY, HIS TOTAL PSYCHE...

AGGH!

A VOID? SOBE... ALL AH SAW WAS A LIFELESS, EMPTY VOID...

THE EFFORT OF REACHING OUT WAS TOO MUCH. SOBE DIED BEFORE HE EVEN TOUCHED ME. POOR LITTLE THING.

DEAR LORD, HOW CAN YOU ALLOW THIS AGONY? HOW CAN YOU?

BUT NO... IT ISN'T GOD WHO'S CAUSING THIS--

NO MORE, DO
YOU HEAR--
AH'VE HAD
ENOUGH!

AH'VE HEARD THE LAST
MOTHER WAIL IN AGONY,
SEEN THE LAST WITHERED
INFANT GINK SENSE-
LESSLY INTO
OBLIVION!

THE OTHER X-MEN ARE SO CLOSE
TO GIVIN' UP-- AH GEE IT IN THEIR
EYES, HEAR IT BEHIND EVERY WORD
THEY SPEAK-- THEY'VE FORGOTTEN
WHY WE CAME!

BUT
NOT
ROGUE!

MAYBE AH
CAN'T DO ANY
REAL GOOD IN
THIS CAMP...

...BUT I CAN
MAKE THE **WORLD**
A LITTLE BETTER,
MR. ENTITY...

...BY
TAKIN'
CARE OF
YOU!

BACK AT THE CAMPFIRE,
ROGUE FINDS HER VALIANT
COMPATRIOTS DEEP IN MUCH
NEEDED SLUMBER...

YES, SLEEP MY
FRIENDS, Y'ALL HAVE
EARNED IT... AND
WHILE YOU SLEEP,
LET ME TAKE THE
POWERS AH NEED...

AND MOVING STEALTHILY
FROM FIGURE TO SILENT
FIGURE, ROGUE GENTLY
TOUCHES OR KISSES
EACH...

...ABSORBING THE
POWERS AND LIKE-
NESSES OF EACH
PEACEFUL DREAMER...

...ALL SAVE
ORORO, WHO
HAS NO MUTANT
ABILITIES TO
STEAL...

HOW THE
SOFT WIND
RISES GLENT
AS THE MOON...
NOW TELLS THE
WITCHING
HOUR...

SOMETHING
BURN AND
DEEP WITHIN
ORORO PULLS
HER BACK TO
SEMI-WAKE-
FULNESS...
THOUGH WHAT
HER OPENED
EYES BEHOLD
COULD MUCH
MORE EASILY
BE A DREAM...

ROGUE--?

WHAT
HAVE YOU
DONE?

WHAT MUST
BE DONE, ORORO!

BUT IT'S
NOTHING! TA
WHAT AH'M
GONNA DO!

NO! STOP!

SHE HAS TAKEN EVERYONE'S
POWERS--LEFT THEM ALL IN
COMAS! IT MUST HAVE BEEN EASY
FOR HER, WITH EVERYONE ASLEEP

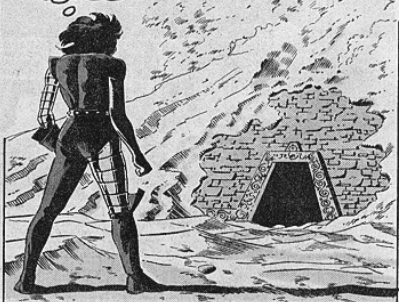
BUT GODDESS
FORGIVE ME, I CANNOT
BELIEVE EVEN SHE CAN
DEFEAT THE ENTITY
ALONE!



BY COMBININ' RAY'S
AN' MAGNETO'S MEMORIES
OF THEIR TUGGLES WITH
THE ENTITY, AN BOT A PRETTY
FAIR NOTION OF WHERE
HE'S HIDIN' OUT!

AN' BUSTER, KNOWIN'
WHAT YOU DID TO MY FRIENDS,
WHAT YOU'RE DOIN' TO THESE
INNOCENT PEOPLE, JUST
MAKES ME THAT MUCH
HADER--

--GO WITH A COMBO
O' HIS MAGNETISM AN'
HER TELEKINESIS, AHM
COMIN' IN TO MAKE YOU
PAY YOUR TAB IN FULL!





CREEPY PLACE!
HE MUST DO HIS OWN
DECORATIN'!



SKREEEEEE



GOTT IM
HIMMEL! THOSE
WERE WARRING
BATS!



BLOOD-
SUCKERS'D BE
JUST RIGHT FOR
HIS PETS!



BUT TOO BAD IF YOU
SENT 'EM OUT TO
STOP ME, BUDDY--
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE
TO DO THAT LITTLE
JOB YOURSELF!



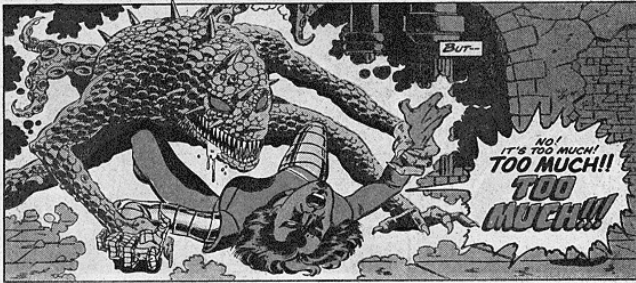
MMMMMMMM

SPEAK O'
THE DEVIL--!



DON'T SOUND SO
SATISFIED--YOU
AINT GONNA EAT
ME.

AH-Y' GONNA
ABSORB YOU--!



BUT--

NO!
IT'S TOO MUCH!
TOO MUCH!!
TOO
MUCH!!!



ROGUE?

NO! ROGUE
ABSORBED THE ENTITY'S
ESSENCE -- BUT IT
OVERWHELMED
HER!

I AM...
ODDLY
CALM!

IT IS AS THOUGH THIS CREATURE,
THIS TEMPLE, WERE FAMILIAR
TO ME! AS IF THEY HAD ALWAYS
BEEN GNAWING AT THE
EDGE OF MY CONSCIOUSNESS,
LIKE A DILLY-REMEMBERED
CHILDHOOD DREAM!

EH?

IT
SENSES
ME!

OF COURSE! IT
ACQUIRED RACHEL'S
PSI-POWER ALONG
WITH ROGUE'S BODY!



AND NIGHTCRAWLER'S
POWER AS WELL,
ENEMY!



I WANT ROGUE
BACK!

I WANT HER BODY! IT IS A
CHORE TO MANIFEST AND
MAINTAIN A PHYSICAL
BODY OF MY OWN!

HOW PLEASANT TO
SLIP INTO SOMETHING
MORE COMFORTABLE!

KLANG

AND
STRONG!



COME BACK,
STORM! THERE
IS NO WAY OUT
IN THAT
DIRECTION!

I KNOW--
THOUGH I AM
NOT CERTAIN
NOW!

PERHAPS THE NEWNESS OF
RACHEL'S POWER IS
CAUSING THE ENTITY TO
"LEAK" SUBLIMINAL
IMAGES!

LIKE
A
CAT
YOU
ARE!



NO MATTER!
LIKE SHADOW-
CAT, I CAN PASS
THROUGH WALLS!
YOU'RE
TRAPPED!

I'LL DRAG YOU TO
THE PIT'S BELOW,
AND CHEW ON YOU
THERE!





THERE IS NOWHERE TO RUN UP HERE-- AND YOU CAN'T FLY!

CAN'T I?

WATCH!



YOU ARE ONE OF THEM, AREN'T YOU? DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHO STRUGGLED AGAINST ME IN ANCIENT DAYS-- MUTATED-- BUT MUCH LIKE THEM! I REMEMBER!



YOUR KIND STROVE TO DESTROY ME-- AND LOST! THEY BUILT THIS TEMPLE TO APPEASE ME-- AND FAILED! HOW SWEET WAS THEIR FRUSTRATION AND DESPAIR!

YOU'VE LEARNED FROM THEIR MISTAKES THOUGH! CALM, UNSHAKABLE, UNAFRAID--

-- YOU *WON'T* FEED ME WHILE YOU LIVE, WILL YOU?



WHO IS HE SPEAKING OF? MY AFRICAN ANCESTORS?

CAN IT BE THAT I HAVE GENETIC MEMORIES OF-- UNNN!

I'LL JUST HAVE TO KILL YOU... AND GULP DOWN YOUR DEATH AGONY!



IMAGINE! ACTUALLY KILLING SOMETHING FOR MYSELF! WHAT A NOVELTY! NEXT, THE BUZZARDS WILL BE DOING IT, TOO!

LIKE A CAT I AM!

ALL I NEED DO IS SURVIVE UNTIL THE POWERS ROGUE STOLE WEAR OFF-- AND THE X-MEN AWAKEN!

YOU WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR YOUR MEAL! THERE ARE A THOUSAND PLACES TO HIDE IN THIS TEMPLE!

OH?



SUPPOSE I BLOW IT AWAY?

BU-WHOOOM



NOT... BAD... THANKS!



YOU THANK ME--? FOR CRUEL DEATH?

ALL THINGS DIE!

BETTER HERE IN THE OPEN...

...WITH THE SKY BECKONING AND THE WIND'S CARESS-- THAN DOWN IN YOUR PITS!

WITH BUT A GESTURE FROM THE ENTITY, THE WORK OF CENTURIES EXPLODES OUTWARD INTO DUST-- THE SHEER CONCLUSIVE FORCE HAMMERING DOWN TO HER KNEES!



SURELY YOU CAN SEE THE FUTILITY...

PHASED
THROUGH
MY PUNCH!



...OF
FACING ONE
WHO CAN TURN
YOUR POWERS
AGAINST
YOU!

BASH!



UNNGH!

I HAVE SEEN YOUR
WEAKNESS, YOUR
PATHETIC
COMPASSION.

AND I KNOW WHY
THERE IS NO SPIRIT
IN YOUR ATTACK.



MY PHYSICAL
FORM IS
THAT OF YOUR
FRIEND!

HARM ME-- AND
YOU HARM HER!!

HOW EXQUISITE IS YOUR ANGUISH? HOW
DELICIOUS YOUR DILEMMA!



I'VE GOT
HER! SHE
CAN'T PHASE
ANYMORE!

NOW SHE
CAN BE
BEATEN!

SILLY GIRL-- TAKE YOUR STUPID
POWERS BACK-- I DON'T HAVE TO
FIGHT YOU TO BEAT YOU!

I AM THE EMBODIMENT
OF DESPAIR!

I GROW STRONG ON
THE WEAKNESS
OF OTHERS!



SKASSH!

WHILE SUFFERING EXISTS-- I AM!

NIGHTCRAWLER--
STOP HER!



JAWOHL,
MAGNETO!

BAME!

BUT I FEAR IT WILL
BE TEMPORARILY
AT BEST!

UNGH!!

THAT'S ALL THE
TIME RAY NEEDS
TO REACH HER!

IF WE CAN'T
DEFEAT THE
ENTITY, AT LEAST
WE CAN TRY TO
SAVE ROGUE!

THE YOUNG PHOENIX UNLEASHES
A BOLT OF TELEPATHIC ENERGY
THAT STRIKES TO THE CENTER OF
ROGUE'S PSYCHE...

... AND
SPLITS THE
ENTITY
FROM HER
BEING.

IT IS
DONE.

GENTLY. LET HER
DOWN EASY,
MAGNETO!

I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER IF
WE'VE REALLY WON ANYTHING.

STORM LIVES.
ROGUE IS FREE.
IT IS A
VICTORY OF
SORTS.

IT'S A
MEANINGLESS
VICTORY!
DON'T YOU SEE?
THE ENTITY
STILL LIVES!

NOTHING'S
CHANGED!

PERHAPS, MY ANCESTORS
CAME FROM THIS PLACE--
THE HUMAN RACE, IT IS
SAID, WAS BORN HERE.

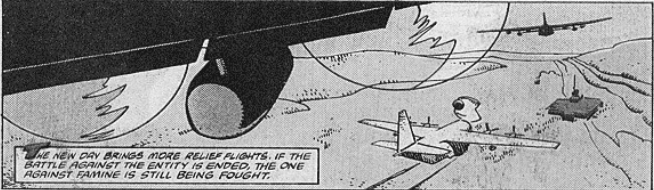
PERHAPS THE ENTITY IS
THE ULTIMATE PRIMAL
MUTANT--WHO EVOLVED
ALONGSIDE HUMANITY,
BUT ON A PLANE OF EXIST-
TENCE MORE PSYCHIC
THAN PHYSICAL.

CONSIDER IT LIKE A
MAGGOT, A SCAVEN-
GER, LIVING OFF
HUMAN SUFFERING.

THE MORE INTENSE OUR
MISERY, THE BETTER
ITS MEAL.

I... FELT IT, ORORO. THE
ENTITY HAS EXISTED FOR
AS LONG AS THE HUMAN
SPECIES...

... AND IT WILL CONTINUE
TO, BECAUSE OF HUMANITY'S
VERY NATURE, THE DARKNESS
THAT SEEMS TO BE IN ALL
OUR SOULS.



THE NEW DAY BRINGS MORE RELIEF FLIGHTS. IF THE BATTLE AGAINST THE ENTITY IS ENDED, THE ONE AGAINST FAMINE IS STILL BEING FOUGHT.

BUT EVEN AS THE X-MEN USE THEIR SPECIAL ABILITIES TO SPEED THE PRECIOUS CARGO'S DISTRIBUTION...

...DOUBTS, QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NIGHT'S EXPERIENCE STILL LINGER.

EVEN PRESUMING WE DEFEATED THIS... THIS PRIMAL BEING--

--WHAT ROUSED IT TO SUDDENLY ATTACK NOW... WHY THIS PARTICULAR TIME?

INSTEAD OF AN EARLIER CENTURY, ANOTHER MILLENNIUM, NIGHTCRAWLER? ASK YOURSELF, WHAT IS DIFFERENT THIS GENERATION THAN ANY PREVIOUS ONE.

MUTANTS.

SO I SUSPECT, WOLVERINE.

THE RISE OF HOMO SAPIENS SUPERIOR MAY HAVE EXCITED THE ENTITY. HE FEEDS ON PSYCHIC MISERY. TO PURSUE A RATHER NASTY ANALOGY--WE COULD REPRESENT A NEW FLAVOR.

THAT SUPPOSED T'LEAVE US FLATTERED?

PERHAPS THE ATTACK WAS TO TEST IF WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO HARM OR DESTROY HIM.

AN' AHM NOT SO SURE WE DIDN'T FLUNK IT--STORM.

WE MAY ALSO HAVE SEEMED A THREAT. LOGAN. AFTER AGES, SOMEONE--RACHEL AND MAGNETO--MANAGED TO DETECT HIM.

YOU MISS THE POINT, ROGUE. THE ENTITY SURVIVES ON MISERY--

--BUT IT DOES NOT CREATE IT. IT IS NOT EVIL IN AND OF ITSELF.

IT IS, IF ANYTHING, PART OF THE NATURAL ORDER. NO MORE TO BE FEARED AND HATED THAN THE WORMS AND SCAVENGERS THAT EAT THE DEAD.

THEN WE'VE SERVED NO PURPOSE HERE, ORORO! WITH THE SUFFERING THAT ALREADY SURROUNDS US... MUST THE WORLD ALSO LIVE FOREVER IN THE SHADOW OF THAT MONSTER?

EVERYWHERE WE TURN OF LATE, MY FAITH SUFFERS ANOTHER BLOW. MY SOUL IS SQUEEZED DRYER. I DON'T NEED SOMETHING ELSE TO HELPLESSLY ENDURE... I NEED A VICTORY!

WE ALL DO, KURT--

--BUT THIS TIME IT IS BEYOND MUTANT POWERS AND DANGER ROOM STRATEGIES!

GRIPES! TO REALLY GET RID OF THAT MONSTER, WE GOTTA ELIMINATE ALL MISERY! NOT EXACTLY WHAT THE WORLD HAS A GREAT TRACK RECORD AT SO FAR--

MAYBE, IF YOU'RE LIKE MOTHER TERESA, YOU COULD SPEND YOUR LIFE HERE, SAVING AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE. BUT MOST OF US AREN'T SAINTS. I DON'T KNOW IF THERE IS A WAY OF WINNING, FUZZY ELF--

--SO MAYBE I'LL JUST KEEP UNLOADING THESE PLANES AND TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.

BY NIGHTFALL, MANY
PLACES HAVE BEEN
EMPTYED. YET, AGAINST
THE NUMBERS, WAITING,
HUNGRY... IT SEEMS SO
LITTLE. WEARY, AS
MUCH IN SPIRIT AS
MIND AND BODY, THE
X-MEN ARE DRAWN TO
ONE SPOT OF LIGHT,
OF WARMTH.

C'MON, KID. TAKE
THE SOUP. TAKE--

HE CAN'T DO IT. IT'S TOO
BLASTED LITTLE, TOO LATE.
WE'RE RACKIN' UP
ANOTHER LOSS!

EVEN
IF HE UNDERSTOOD
OUR LANGUAGE, WOLVERINE,
Y'ALL GOTTA REALIZE...
SOMETIMES, WHEN THEY'RE
THIS WEAK... THEY KINDA
GIVE UP... CAN'T ACCEPT
THE FOOD AN'...
AN...

YEAH,
MOTHER NATURE
ALWAYS CUTS HER
LOSSES, ROGUE,
BUT JUST
ONCE...

LOGAN--
HE'S TAKIN'
IT. HE'S
EATIN'!

YEAH.

THERE'S SOMETHIN',
ELE. THIS KID HAS NO
SUPER-POWERS... NO-
THIN'... EXCEPT HOPE! IT'S
AS IMPORTANT AS FOOD...
CAUSE WITHOUT IT...
WITHOUT THE WILL TO
LIVE IT BRINGS...YOU'RE
FINISHED.

AS
ANY OF US MIGHT
HAVE BEEN,
KURT--

"ALONE
AGAINST THE ENTITY.
THAT'S WHEN HOPE COMES
HARDEST. BUT WHEN HAVE
EACH OTHER... WE DRAW
STRENGTH FROM THAT
KNOWLEDGE AND NEVER
GIVE UP... NO MATTER
HOW HOPELESS THE
STRUGGLE.

WE STILL DIDN'T WIN.
THE SAME BATTLE MAY
HAVE TO BE FOUGHT
TOMORROW... TONIGHT...
THE NEXT
MOMENT!

PERHAPS, MY FRIEND, THAT IS THE ANSWER. THAT WE ARE WILLING TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT. ALWAYS.

YOU COUNTER DESPAIR WITH HOPE. YOU STRIVE FOREVER FOR THE BEST YOU ARE CAPABLE TO BE! THEREIN LIES THE VICTORY! A TINY ONE FOR NOW, BUT A BEGINNING... WHO KNOWS WHERE IT WILL END?

IT IS NOT JUST OUR BATTLE, BUT EVERYONE'S. FOUGHT WHEREVER A HUMAN BEING LIVES AND BREATHES. A WAR FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF EACH COMBATANT, THE BODIES ARE MERELY THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

HERE, WE HAVE DISCOVERED THE TRUE NATURE OF OUR FOE, AND LEARNED HOW TO COMBAT HIM. NOW WE MUST DO IT.

I CAN FEEL HIM. WOLVERINE. WATCHING. EAGER. HUNGRY.

THE ENTITY'S STILL HERE.

THAT'S RIGHT, KITTEN. BUT SO ARE WE.

AND IN THE CHILL DARKNESS OF THE AFRICAN DESERT, THEY WAIT FOR MORNING. FOR THE NEXT FLIGHT OF RELIEF PLANES, FOR THE ARRIVAL OF OTHERS AS QUALIFIED FOR THIS STRUGGLE AS THE X-MEN ARE FOR THOSE THEY MUST FACE BACK HOME. TOGETHER, HUMAN AND MUTANT WAIT...

...AND HOPE.

One night, a few months ago, artist **Jim Starlin** called me at home to propose an idea that his friend and fellow artist **Berni Wrightson** had suggested to him — that Marvel Comics publish a special issue of **The X-Men**, a benefit book for famine relief in Africa. **Jim** and **Berni** wanted to do the book as a “jam”, with many artists and writers contributing, which would enable us to bring a small **army** of outstanding talents together on the project, making it a real event. I thought it was a great idea. The next morning, I pitched it to Publisher **Mike Hobson** and President **Jim Galton**. They liked it. They agreed that if the creators would donate their work, Marvel would donate all revenue from the book to an appropriate charity organization. Furthermore, they would attempt to get support from the project from other quarters as well.

So we began. **Jim** and **Berni** recruited the artists. **Chris Claremont**, the highly-acclaimed regular writer of **The X-Men**, quickly volunteered to recruit writers, and to help **Ann Nocenti**, editor of **The X-Men** coordinate the entire project.

It wasn't easy. In addition to the creative people listed below, there were many others who gave selflessly of their time, effort, energy and talent to make this book a reality. They are, unfortunately, too many to list. I thank them anyway, and also the dozens of creators who would have willingly participated if there had been space for them. Special thanks must be given to **Janet Jackson** for designing and executing the title logo, the people of the **Marvel Bullpen** who did all the production work, to **Curtis Circulation Company** for donating all of their profits, and to the many **I.D. Wholesalers** and **Direct Distributors**, and **Comics Specialty Shops**, who also donated money independently.

Thanks most of all to **you**, for buying this book and helping in the effort to provide famine relief and recovery in Africa. We hope you enjoy this unique X-Men adventure. If you do, please recommend it to your friends.

Again, thanks.



Jim Shooter
Editor in Chief

